United Nations COPUOS/T.433

Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

Unedited transcript

433rd Meeting
Monday, 2 June 1997, 3 p.m.
Vienna

Chairman: Mr. HOHENFELLNER (Austria)
later: Mr. RAO (India)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Opening of the session

The CHAIRMAN: I know declare open the fortieth anniversary session, and the 433rd meeting, of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

Adoption of the agenda

The CHAIRMAN: You have before you, for your approval and adoption, the Provisional Agenda for the session (document A/AC.105/L.212). If I hear no objection, I consider that this agenda is adopted.

It is so decided.

Election of officers

The CHAIRMAN: At the 1996 session of COPUOS, on the basis of our discussions on working methods of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies, I was entrusted with the ask of conducting inter-sessional informal consultations with Committee members, with the aim of presenting consensus decisions to this session of the Committee on the modalities of establishing a new composition of the Bureau, bearing in mind the principles of both equitable geographical representation and rotation. The Committee further recommended that all proposals made by delegations, including those concerning restructuring of the agenda and examination of the duration of the session, would be fully taken into account in the framework of those informal consultations.

In accordance with this mandate and with the assistance of the Secretariat and bureau members, I organized six meetings of such informal consultations (five were held in Vienna, and one in New York) between July 1996 and April 1997. As many of you are aware, these consultations were not always straightforward, as we started off with many differing views and proposals. I made the point at the beginning of the consultations that I was determined to reach an agreement on new working methods, as well as a new Bureau, so that I could step down at the opening of this session. And with the cooperation of Committee members, some of whom had to make extensive compromises, we were able to successfully conclude those consultations.

The results are twofold. The first concerns my package proposal on the working methods of the

In its resolution 50/27 of 16 February 1996, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendation of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space that, beginning with its thirty-ninth session, the Committee would be provided with unedited transcripts in lieu of verbatim records. This record contains the texts of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages as transcribed from taped recordings. The transcripts have not been edited or revised.

Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, within one week of the date of publication, to the Chief, Translation and Editorial Service, room D0708, United Nations Office at Vienna, P.O. Box 500, A-1400, Vienna, Austria. Corrections will be issued in a consolidated corrigendum.

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Committee and its subsidiary bodies, contained in document A/AC.105/L.213, which is now before the Committee and which sets out: the consensus text agreed upon concerning the composition of the Bureau of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies; agenda structures; and duration of sessions. As concerns agenda structures, you will recall that at its thirty-ninth session the Committee recommended that at its 1997 session, the Legal Subcommittee should continue its open-ended informal consultations with a view to coming up with a list of annotated items agreed upon by consensus that could be considered by the Committee at its fortieth session for possible inclusion in that Subcommittee's agenda.

At its 1997 session, the Legal Subcommittee recommended that a new agenda item, "Review of the status of the five international legal instruments on outer space" (contained in document A/AC.105/C.2/L.206/Rev.1), should be included in the agenda of the Legal Subcommittee as from its 1998 session.

At this point I would like to put on record that during the consultations, concerns were expressed that the process for reaching an agreement on the Committee's working methods would prejudge the substantive consideration by the Legal Subcommittee of a new item for its agenda. The Subcommittee continued its work on the selection of a new agenda item and recommended the adoption of the proposal to review the status of the five international legal instruments on outer space, and the package proposal recommended for adoption contains the decision reached by the Legal Subcommittee. The sixth informal consultation was held following this decision by the Subcommittee, and the package proposal which is now before you (document A/AC.105/L.213, Part A) was agreed by consensus at that time.

Having made this brief introduction to the package proposal, do I take it that the Committee is in a position to formally adopt the package proposal contained in Part A of document A/AC.105/L.213? If I hear no objections, this package proposal is adopted.

It is so decided. This package proposal as contained in Part A of document A/AC.105/L.213 will be annexed to the report of the Committee.

The second set of results of the informal consultations mentioned previously concern the composition of the Bureau of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies. At the sixth meeting of the informal consultations, we continued our discussions on possible candidates for the Bureau. After lengthy discussion among the Member States and regional groups concerned, it was agreed that the composition of the Bureau of the Committee for the first three-year term, beginning with the current session, would be as follows:

Chairman: Professor U.R. Rao (India)
First Vice-Chairman: Ambassador Raimundo Gonzalez (Chile)
Second Vice-Chairman/ Rapporteur: Professor Mouslim Kabbaj (Morocco)

It was agreed that the Chairman of the Committee for the second three-year term (i.e. starting in the year 2000) would be Ambassador Raimundo Gonzalez (Chile), and that the candidates for the other positions would be determined through consultations between the Asian and African Groups.

It was further agreed that the Chairmen of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the Legal Subcommittee for the first three-year term, starting in 1998, would remain Professor Dietrich Rex (Germany) and Dr. Vaclav Mikulka (Czech Republic), respectively. The chairmanships of both Subcommittees will continue to be held for the second three-year period (i.e. as from 2001) by the Western European and Others Group and the Eastern European Group. All the above details and results of the discussions in the informal consultations can be found in Part B of document A/AC.105/L.213.

I have thus outlined the results of the intersessional informal consultations among members of the Committee with regard to the composition of the Bureau. If so agreed by the Committee, the package proposal and composition of the Bureau, as contained in Parts A and B of document A/AC.105/L.213, shall be annexed to the report of the Committee.

I see no objections. That being the case, may I propose to the Committee that Professor U.R. Rao (India), Ambassador Raimundo Gonzalez (Chile) and Professor Mouslim Kabbaj (Morocco) be elected as Chairman, First Vice-Chairman and Second Vice-Chairman/Rapporteur, respectively? I see no objections.

It is so decided. (*Applause*)

I congratulate Professor Rao, a senior member of the Committee, Ambassador Gonzalez, a veteran (if I may say so) in United Nations matters and specifically as

concerns outer space, and Professor Kabbaj, a very active participant in the more recent years of the Committee's work, on their election to the new Bureau. I will shortly invite the newly elected members of the Bureau to take their seats on the podium. Before doing so, I would like to state unequivocally that the Committee has just concluded a profound reform in the way of conducting its work.

As my last act as Chairman of this Committee, I would now like to make some very brief comments on the work of this Committee in the field of the peaceful uses of outer space during my tenure, and from the viewpoint of Austria, which has held the chairmanship of this Committee for the past 35 years.

It is with mixed feelings that I bid you farewell. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time as Chairman; over the years I have been here, it has been my great pleasure to have come to know many of your personally.

Throughout its history, COPUOS has made vital contributions to the peaceful uses of outer space. It has promoted international cooperation and has successfully worked towards ensuring that all countries, particularly the developing countries, share the benefits of space applications. One of its crowning achievements is that it has created an entirely new body of international law to regulate space activities. However, the Committee has also had its share of frustration: lengthy and comparatively insignificant negotiations over somewhat parochial points of view have sometimes taken place. This is the nature of international relations, particularly when trying to reach consensus decisions; but the decisions reached are solid and long-lasting.

Although today I close the door on one phase of my direct involvement in the United Nations at the multilateral level, I will continue to follow United Nations affairs as part of my responsibilities in the Austrian Foreign Service. I am sure I speak on behalf of the Government of Austria in saying that it has been a great privilege and honour for Austria to hold the chairmanship of the Committee since its inception. Austria has always shown a great interest in the Committee's work, which has been clearly demonstrated by the calibre of its past Chairmen, among them Foreign Ministers and other high-ranking officials.

Since I joined the Committee in 1985, first as a delegate and than as its Chairman, I have been privileged to witness many significant events of international importance. When I first arrived, the negotiations on the Principles Relating to Remote Sensing of the Earth from Space were at an advanced stage. I had the satisfaction of playing a major role in finalizing them. Thereafter, in 1992 the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space, negotiated under my chairmanship, were adopted. Last year, thanks to the untiring efforts of my good friend, Ambassador Raimundo González of Chile, the Declaration on Outer Space Benefits was recommended for adoption by the General Assembly. Finally, this year we celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Outer Space Treaty, the "magna carta" of outer space law.

In terms of scientific achievements of the Committee, the birth and development of the idea to establish regional centres for space science and technology education was a major achievement. To date, one centre has been established and agreements to create similar centres in other regions of the world have been reached. More recently, through its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, the Committee began a comprehensive examination of the complex issue of space debris.

Another major accomplishment of this Committee, unprecedented in many aspects, is the decision to convene UNISPACE III in Vienna in July 1999. This decision, which is to be finalized during this session, provides the foundation for a unique opportunity for the world community to meet to discuss matters of mutual concern in the peaceful uses of outer space. I am sure you will agree that your work towards this goal has been very rewarding and signifi-cant. Beyond the substantive benefits, your decisions on the organization of the Conference are innovative and take into consideration the current financial situation of the United Nations. Indeed, these innovations could serve a the model for future global conferences sponsored by the United Nations.

Over the years the Committee has taken significant and far-reaching steps to improve its working methods and effectiveness. Your decision to utilize unedited transcripts is a shining example of your efforts, and one which has been acknowledged by the entire United Nations system as a possible model to be followed in the future. Your efforts with regard to the organization of UNISPACE III fall into the same category.

Finally, the work carried out during the inter-sessional period is a truly remarkable accomplishment. You have revolutionized the way in which our business is conducted to more clearly reflect the current international situation. With all these innovations in its

working methods, the Committee, long recognized as a pioneer in many areas, will undoubtedly retain its reputation as a "trail blazer" for the entire United Nations system.

I have enjoyed being a part of all these developments which took place under my chairmanship. However, I am also mindful that the time has come for me to step down and hand over the reins to a new Chairman at a time when the Committee is being revitalized, and fresh impetus is being given to its working methods. I would be very remiss if, at this point, I did not applaud the tireless efforts of the Secretariat in working with the Committee in pursuit of its objectives, and for providing such innovative ideas for the Committee to discuss and agree upon. I would like to thank specifically the Director of the Office for Outer Space Affairs and his staff for all their work. I would also like to pay tribute to the Director-General, Giorgio Giacomelli, who has overseen and closely guided the work of the Secretariat. I have indeed been fortunate in getting to know many of you through the work of our Committee, and am happy to count many among you as my close friends. I look forward to continuing that friendship beyond my tenure in the Committee as we continue to work together on issues of international concern.

As I leave the Chair, I leave with a strong sense of accomplishment. I am certain that I am leaving you in good hands, and I have every confidence that the new Bureau will brightly lead the Committee into the next millennium. I thank you for all these wonderful memories, and I wish you every success in your future endeavours. (*Applause*)

I have been informed that the delegation of Japan has asked the floor, and I therefore give the floor to the distinguished representative of Japan.

Mr. Y. IKEDA (Japan): I felt I could not let this moment go without expressing my sincere appreciation to you for your outstanding contribution to the Committee's work since 1991.

Under your chairmanship, over the last six years the Committee has registered several major achievements. I would like to recall some of them. As concerns substantive matters, at its thirty-fifth session the Committee approved the text of the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space, which was then adopted by the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. After many years of negotiation, at its thirty-ninth session the Committee adopted the draft Declaration on International Cooperation in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space for the Benefit and in the Interests of all States, taking into particular account the Needs of Developing Countries. It was then approved by the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. Again at its thirty-ninth session, the Committee decided to convene a special session of COPUOS, which will be called UNISPACE III, open to all Member States of the United Nations, which will take place before the turn of the century.

Regarding organizational matters, in 1994 the membership of the Committee was enlarged from 53 to 61. As concerns the records of both the Committee and its Legal Subcommittee, as a cost-saving measure unedited transcripts were introduced to replace summary records. This was the first trial of this kind to be undertaken within the United Nations, and the General Assembly itself has followed the results of this trial in COPUOS with great interest.

The most prominent achievement under your chairmanship has been the conclusion of the series of inter-sessional informal consultations on the working methods of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies, which resulted in a consensus agreement. In the light of reforms within the United Nations as well as the new era which has emerged following the end of the cold war, we have begun to consider how to adjust the existing working methods of the Committee and its two Subcommittees in line with the new challenges which have arisen. The formulation of the Chairman's package proposal was obviously extremely difficult: you had to take into account the delicate balance of various interests of the Member States. Had it not been for your extraordinary leadership and experience, a consensus agreement would never have emerged from these complex consultations, which lasted for almost one full year.

It is hard for me to fully express my appreciation for all you have done, and this Committee has indeed been fortunate to have had you as its Chairman at this important juncture in its forty-year history. With the formal adoption of the Chairman's package proposal, we have turned a new page of COPUOS. The five offices within the bureau of the Committee and its Subcommittees will rotate among five regional groups, with three-year terms and the possibility of one re-election. A new item, "Review of the status of the five international legal instruments on outer space", has been added to the agenda of the Legal Subcommittee. A new pattern of meetings, comprising five-and-a-half weeks in total for the Committee and its Subcommittees, will be

introduced. While these new arrangements are being introduced, the principle of consensus remains.

As we are all aware, we have just established the principle of adopting new working methods. Our next objective is to apply the new principle in the most appropriate manner in order to realize the objectives of the reform exercise – that is, the adjustment and revitalization of the work of COPUOS and its subsidiary bodies to meet the new challenges which have arisen. COPUOS should continue to play a fundamental role in ensuring that the exploration and uses of outer space remain peaceful and make a valuable contribution to mankind: this is a prerequisite for our future work.

I would like to congratulate Professor Rao, Ambassador González and Professor Kabbaj on their election as the new members of the Bureau. It is my sincere hope as well as my firm belief that COPUOS will be guided as effectively as before under Professor Rao's chairmanship. COPUOS faces many challenges in the years ahead, chief among which is the holding of UNISPACE III before the turn of the century, as well as the multi-year work plan on space debris, which will be completed by 1999. My country, as a Member State of this Committee, will make every effort to support the Chairman and other members of the Bureau so that the Committee can continue to play its full role in United Nations activities in the field of the peaceful uses of outer space.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for your statement and the kind words addressed to me. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of the United States.

Mr. K. HODGKINS (United States of America): On behalf of the United States delegation, it is my pleasure to congratulate Professor Rao, Ambassador González and Professor Kabbaj on their election to the Bureau. Each brings with them a wealth of experience in both space affairs and in multilateral diplomacy which will serve this Committee well as we enter a new phase of our work. Please be assured that the new Bureau has my delegation's full support in its efforts to promote, through COPUOS, international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space.

I would like to offer my delegation's sincerest thanks to you, Mr. Chairman, for the outstanding role you have played as our Chairman and as Austria's representative to COPUOS. Your personal dedication to this Committee has been an inspiration to us all and you leave a record of accomplishment which will be hard to match. With your permission I would like to highlight what my delegation considers to be your greatest accomplishments, both as Chairman, as Austrian representative, and as a mediator for several difficult issues before the Committee when you first joined us in 1985.

Almost single-handedly, you brought COPUOS back from the brink of disaster in 1985 and restored consensus and a sense of trust among the members of the Committee. Under your leadership, COPUOS adopted the Principles on remote sensing and nuclear power sources; we agreed on the Declaration on international space cooperation; the Committee and its Subcommittees added several new items to their agendas; and a working group of the whole was established on the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE 82.

In addition, you introduced eight new Member States to our Committee. Under your leadership, we adopted a series of reform measures vastly improving our utilization of conference resources, and thus achieving a saving of $1.5 million per biennium. We have been able to expand the opportunities available to developing countries to benefit from space exploration, through the Space Applications Programme. In conjunction with COSPAR and the IAF, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee now holds seminars on specific themes. COPUOS has provided support to three meetings of the Space Conference of the Americas, and has also reached agreement to hold UNISPACE III.

You played a major role in achieving all these measures, and we greatly appreciate your efforts. This alone is an impressive list of achievements, which is all the more remarkable when during much of this time you also served as Permanent Representative to the United Nations and President of the Security Council. Ironically enough, the most fitting tribute to your unequalled dedication to this Committee is the package proposal, which ended your tenure as Chairman while at the same time leaving COPUOS well placed to meet the challenges of the future. The preparation of this package proposal was indeed a thankless task, but you completed it with the exceptional diplomatic skill and professionalism which have been your trademarks over the years.

In conclusion, I would like to add that it has been my personal pleasure to have worked with you over the past ten years, and also with Franz Cede, Hans Winkler, Helmut Freudenschuss and Helmut Bock, who have made enormous contributions to the success of this body.

Much has been accomplished and the future holds great promise for COPUOS, due in large part to the role played by our our colleagues from Austria.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the distinguished representative of the United States for his kind and moving words addressed to me. The next speaker is the distinguished representative of Sudan.

Mr. A. ABDEL HAKIM (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I would like to speak on behalf of both Sudan and of the African Group. Mohamed, the Prophet of Islam, said that those who do not address thanks to people do not address thanks to God. On this occasion, I wish to extend to you, Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the African Group, our thanks and appreciation for your continuous contributions to this important Committee since you joined it as the representative of Austria in 1985, and assumed its leadership in 1991.

The accomplishments which have been listed by former speakers, as well as the achievements of COPUOS under your leadership, are a tribute to your remarkable personal characteristics, as well as your technical and diplomatic skills – your patience, perseverance and sincerity – which have characterized your work over the years. Previous speakers have already mentioned the accomplishments of COPUOS during this period, both as concerns substantive and organizational matters. The adoption of the sets of Principles and also the Declaration, which pays particular attention to the needs of the developing countries, are major achievements.

On the organizational side, the increase in the number of members of the Committee and your final accomplishments in the package proposal as concerns methods of work and the structure of the new Bureau, also represents very fair treatment of the developing countries. Whereas the Declaration does refer to the necessity of granting special attention to the needs of developing countries, the leadership of the Committee had always remained a monopoly held by other parties. However, the new structure, which has brought to the fore representatives of three groups from the developing countries, while retaining the participation of the other two groups, recognizes three issues. The first is that the organizational reforms are in keeping with the contents of the Declaration. Secondly, the developing countries are now accorded the opportunity to make a real contribution to the work of COPUOS. And lastly, the Committee will continue its work with the combined efforts of all its members.

Your achievements and the proposals which we approved today have rendered this Committee ever stronger and more capable to attain new heights in its future achievements. The greatest tribute we can pay to you is to comply with the new methods of work and to expand the scope of the peaceful uses of outer space. We offer you our sincerest thanks: many people step down from posts – and indeed depart from this life – and leave nothing behind. You have established many firm friendships among the members of the Committee and laid foundations for work which will remain everlasting. I would like to thank both you and the Republic of Austria, which introduced you to this Committee and has allowed you to donate your time to the service of COPUOS, and thus to the service of humanity.

In conclusion, I would like to offer my sincere congratulations to Professor Rao. I believe this Committee is very fortunate to have its leadership assumed by someone of his experience and excellence. I would also like to congratulate Ambassador González, who has made major contributions to our work, which I am sure he will continue to do, as well as Professor Kabbaj, whose energy and knowledge will ensure that the African continent has a worthy representative. May I also congratulate Professor Rex and Dr. Mikulka for their excellent continued efforts in the goals they are pursuing. The African Group will spare no effort or endeavour in assisting the new members of the Bureau in our important humanitarian work.

I would like to thank the members of the Committee for allowing the inter-sessional informal consultations to take place under your very able chairmanship; their results represent a considerable achievement.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your kind and moving words. The next speaker on my list is the distinguished representative of Morocco.

Mr. A. BENMOUSSA (Morocco) *(interpretation from French)*: Thank you. The tradition which has been adhered to in the United Nations system is to refrain from taking the floor when the chairman of a regional group has already done so – and done so in a most effective way! However, I have a small advantage over colleagues present here in COPUOS, and that is that I have known you for many, many years, dating back to the time when you were the Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations. So I have had the opportunity to become very familiar with the quality of your work, always

excellent, from the time you were President of the Security Council.

I can bear witness to the fact that watching you work, I have seen people the world over hanging on your every word, and on your initiatives. I remember from this earlier period that as well as my solid friendship with you, I also had a very deep admiration for you.

Today, COPUOS is the order of the day, and on behalf of His Majesty the King of Morocco, I would like to offer a tribute and our gratitude to you: I say tribute, because all who have had the opportunity to meet and know you within COPUOS have been able to appreciate the high level of professionalism and leadership which you have demonstrated throughout both your period as Austrian representative in 1985, and in your tenure as Chairman since 1991. These qualities have helped guide the Committee through many difficult periods. You have certainly enriched multilateral diplomacy, no mean task, and have played a major role in many of the achievements of COPUOS, which the representatives of Japan and the United States have enumerated. And I say "gratitude", because it does not take a genius to recognize the fact that you have revolutionized COPUOS. You have organized and led six very difficult and intense rounds of negotiations in the informal consultations, resulting in radical modifications in our methods of work, and the achievement of a consensus concerning changes in membership of the Bureau. This has offered COPUOS a new institutional stability, without which it could have been in serious danger.

I would like to propose that your speech, which I found very moving, be circulated as an official document of the work of this Committee at its fortieth session. Knowing full well the deep qualities which you have always demonstrated, I must add that it is simply not possible to let you just go like this! We will have to devise a magic formula which will make it possible for you to continue to play an important role at this landmark conference which is on the horizon, UNISPACE III. We must all give this matter some serious consideration!

I could not close without also paying tribute to the Republic of Austria because it and you are inextricably linked: you have been the representative of Austria, and have made it possible for COPUOS to work under excellent conditions throughout the period of the cold war, when the Chair of the Committee was a tremendous problem. Austria deserves the gratitude of us all for steering our COPUOS ship through troubled waters. You have been able to ensure that we had this essential confidence and trust, so vital in multilateral forums. As the years pass, I am ever more convinced that without this trust, the United Nations system would simply crumble. You have established trust in this Committee, as you have done in other areas and as you will certainly continue to do wherever you go. History will remember your chairmanship as heralding the introduction of equitable geographic distribution, international equity, and democratization of an essential body in international cooperation.

On behalf of my Government, I would like to express from the bottom of my heart our gratitude and our hope that you will continue to participate in and follow the work of COPUOS.

Before concluding, I would be remiss if I did not thank most warmly all the members of the Bureau and the Secretariat, and in particular Mr. Giorgio Giacomelli, who has been catalytic in so many of our efforts.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the distinguished representative of Morocco for his kind words addressed to the Director-General, to myself and to my country. The next speaker on my list is the distinguished representative of Chile.

Mr. R. GONZALEZ (Chile) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is particularly unfortunate for my delegation to be losing such a friend, because the friend we first met in 1985 led us to a new atmosphere of cooperation in our work. This in turn has led to concrete successes in the United Nations in the area of outer space.

In 1985, I remember clearly an occasion when I had the privilege of having lunch with you at the Chilean mission in New York. At the time I was a modest counsellor; now I am a modest ambassador. I recall your efforts to revitalize not only the subject which we were discussing, Earth observation by satellite – which was of major importance for developing countries – but COPUOS as a whole. Countless efforts were made: we were witnesses of the extensive discussions at the Austrian mission to the United Nations, and after lengthy and sustained negotiations we reached a conclusion, a document which has not been truly appreciated to this day. Not only did we overcome the crisis situation which obtained at that time, but we actually made significant progress. Your ability as a negotiator played and extremely vital role.

A few years later, you became Chairman of this Committee. As the years marched on, I had an opportunity to work very closely with both yourself and the Austrian delegation. We were able to resolve an

important issue in international relations when we adopted, by consensus, the Principles relating to cooperation in space. We modestly refer to this as the beginning of the access of all States to the benefits of space activities, without taking into account their levels of scientific advancement. Your abilities as a negotiator were an example to follow: you taught me so much. Here I would mention another "self-criticism": even within the United Nations, where one would expect to find people with the most appropriate intellectual training in such matters, as well as those in our own countries, this achievement has not been truly appreciated. The significance of bringing technology – observation, meteorology, etc. – closer to those who, on a daily basis, face problems of economic and social development, is a truly major achievement. You have sown the seeds of sustained scientific and legal progress in the future, which is vital, and it helps those of us who are continuing in the Committee to assume the heavy burden of the work which lies ahead. We will do our utmost to see that the solid basis which has now been established will gradually materialize into realities, and will lead to improve-ments in the social development of all peoples. Following the end of the cold war, to ensure an improvement in the living conditions of people has to be our main task.

Over the years there have been differences of opinion within the Committee, but they were always frank and were discussed openly. These discrepancies often enriched our debates and helped us to arrive at agreements. COPUOS has reached a critical juncture; we are stepping out on a new path, safe in the knowledge that we have this sound base, and I express my heartfelt gratitude to you for making that possible.

My delegation would like to propose that one paragraph of our report on this session should express the very deep gratitude of COPUOS for your specific contribution to the development of international space cooperation. If we have the capacity to internalize this, we, the developing countries, will be the first to benefit from such cooperation.

I would like to add a few words on my own election as First Vice-Chairman. What you have already achieved as Chairman is very significant; the package proposal before us speaks for itself. You led us through the inter-sessional informal consultations, where sometimes very different points of view were expressed, but we reached a successful conclusion in a relatively short time. On a personal note, I would like to thank colleagues from the Latin American countries for their support for me, which meant a lot to me. The contribution of the Group of 77 was equally important. If I may mention a few individuals: the Chairman of the Latin American Group (the distinguished Ambassador of Bolivia); the Chairman of the Group of 77; my thanks go to Spain, with whom Chile has very special links of solidarity, and where we look forward to very fruitful cooperation in the future; and also the support extended to me by the United States delegation.

I would like to congratulate Professor Rao; I had the honour and privilege to first meet him in 1982, when he chaired a working group within the framework of UNISPACE 82, held in Vienna. This was a conference which, as with any major event of this nature, had its pluses and minuses. Finally it brought together a working group whose mandate was to examine the degree of implementation of UNISPACE 82, and we began to talk about a third UNISPACE conference. I would also like to extend a warm welcome to the distinguished Rapporteur from Morocco, Professor Kabbaj. I would like to congratulate our predecessors in these posts, the Vice-Chairman from Romania, and the impeccable work done by the Rapporteur, from Brazil, who plays a significant role in this type of meeting. We have always benefited from a report on events which was up to date, rigorous and accurate.

In conclusion, I would like to outline you how we see the vice-chairmanship. Firstly, it goes without saying that it means complete loyalty and full cooperation with the Chairman, Professor Rao. Our interest is to exercise a very active involvement in assisting in all the areas within our terms of reference. We do not wish to be passive, as this is neither consistent with the mandate of the Committee nor a very responsible attitude to take. From now on, we hope it will be possible to finalize and put in motion some of our pending work. The dynamics of international relations mean that certain topics reach a stage where they tend to get stuck; it should be possible for us to make a qualitative leap forward in international relations, the principles of which are already established thanks to the work of our earlier meetings.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank my very dear friend, Ambassador González, who was just elected First Vice-Chairman of this Committee. The next speaker on my list is the distinguished representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. E. ZVEDRE (Russian Federation) *(interpretation from Russian)*: On behalf of the Russian delegation, I would like to welcome the new members of the Bureau and congratulate them all, especially

Professor Rao, on their election to these important posts. Under the new leadership, my delegation hopes that COPUOS will maintain its position as the major authority in the area of the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space, and will achieve ever more convincing and innovative results.

My delegation knows Professor Rao very well, and admires his qualities as an eminent scientist and excellent leader who has done much to advance the work of the Committee. He has also worked towards achieving broad-based bilateral relations between India and Russia in the field of space. We therefore extend our very best wishes to him on the complex task which lies before him.

My delegation would also like to pay tribute to you for having led this Committee so successfully over the past few years. Many of our achievements during this period have been due in large part to your experience and guidance, and have been enumerated by previous speakers. It was precisely on your initiative and under your leadership that the inter-sessional informal consultations took place, resulting in a consensus decision on the new arrangements concerning the work of the Committee. All your efforts, your wisdom and your diplomatic skills have been greatly appreciated by us all, and we offer you our very best wishes in your future work.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for your very kind words addressed to me and to the new members of the Bureau. The next speaker on my list is the distinguished representative of the Ukraine.

Mr. KUZNETSOV (Ukraine) *(interpretation from Russian)*: My delegation would like to congratulate Professor Rao, Ambassador González and Professor Kabbaj upon their election to these eminent posts in our Committee.

Today is not an ordinary day: as previous speakers have already mentioned, your unique style and wealth of experience has greatly influenced this Committee, which you have led so well. Austria gave us an extremely eminent diplomat when they appointed you to this Committee many years ago. You have enjoyed such high renown in the international community for so long that paying tribute to you comes very easily and today we acknowledge your total professionalism and superb organizational skills which have benefited our work over the years. We have achieved significant results because you have guided the Committee in a constructive and diplomatic manner. You have laid the foundations for the success of our work as we approach the new millennium, and your knowledge has provided us with invaluable assistance as we begin our preparations for UNISPACE III.

On behalf of the Ukrainian delegation, I wish to express again our deep gratitude and pay tribute to all your excellent work over the years. The Ukrainian national space organization, Yuri ....., an important specialist in our country, has attributed to you the award of Yuri .....kov, and I would like to extend this award to you under somewhat less official circumstances in two hours' time.

The Ukrainian delegation wishes you all the best in your future activities.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your statement, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank you in advance for the high distinction you announced which will be given to me, and which I will be most grateful and honoured to receive. The next speaker on my list is the distinguished representative of Greece.

Ms. H. MICHALOPOULOU (Greece): I wish to express mz delegation's appreciation to you for your outstanding contribution to the effective promotion of the work of COPUOS for so many years, including the recent achievement of reaching a delicate consensus on the issue of the working methods of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies. I would also like to extend our warmest congratulations to the newly elected Chairman and Vice-Chairmen of the Committee, and wish them every success in their endeavours.

My delegation takes this opportunity to reiterate Greece's firm intention to continue not only to actively participate in the work and activities of COPUOS, but also to contribute to further improvement of its organization and functioning as well the promotion and strengthening of its role in the future.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your kind words addressed to myself and to the new members of the Bureau. The next speaker is the distinguished representative of India.

Mr. Y. TIWARI (India): On behalf of both the Asian Group and of India, I would like to express our deep appreciation and gratitude to you for the outstanding leadership you have given this Committee over the past six years.

COPUOS has made great progress in several directions under your chairmanship: the adoption of the

Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space; the Declaration on Outer Space Benefits; the introduction of space debris to the agenda of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee; the expansion of the Committee's membership; the package proposal on working methods; and the decision to convene of UNISPACE III are but a few examples of how you have demonstrated your vast experience, negotiating skills, and your determination to succeed notwithstanding the complex nature of these topics.

You have made sincere and major efforts to continue two vital traditions of the Committee: the commitment to the principle of consensus, and the spirit of cooperation and compromise. At the same time, in line with changes at the international level, you encouraged the discussion of new ideas which have manifested themselves in improving the efficiency of COPUOS and its Subcommittees. We have already seen the fruits of your work to some extent; the future promises further positive results. The Asian Group wishes you every success in the future, and a long and enriched professional and personal life.

I would like to pay tribute to the past Vice-Chairmen, Mr. Mazilu (Romania) and Rapporteur, Mr. Ribeiro (Brazil), for their excellent contributions to the Committee. Special thanks also go to the Government of Austria for its continuing support for the deliberations of this Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your kind words addressed to me. The next speaker on my list is the distinguished representative of Romania.

Mr. M. PISO (Romania): The Romanian delegation offers its sincere congratulations to the new members of the Bureau, Professor Rao, Ambassador González and Professor Kabbaj. We feel sure that the Committee will successfully continue its efforts to improve international cooperation in the global use of outer space under their guidance.

My delegation expresses its highest consideration to you, Mr. Chairman, for your efficient and objective chairmanship. Among your main achievements as Chairman of the Committee, apart from those already cited by previous speakers, I would like to draw attention to the following. The Committee has maintained and developed the principle of consensus in taking decisions during your chairmanship, which is the most effective tool for future coordination of space programmes. We thank you for your exceptional work, and wish you every success in the future.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your kind words addressed to me. The next speaker is the distinguished representative of Turkey.

Mr. O. SÖLENDIL (Turkey): I wish to join with those previous speakers in expressing my delegation's deep appreciation and gratitude for your contributions to this Committee. We wish you all the best in the future; we hope you will continue to be involved in our work, and we are sure that the new members of the Bureau will carry on from where you left off, as it were. My delegation will continue to support and assist the new Bureau as it has in the past.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your kind words addressed to me and to the newly elected Bureau. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Brazil.

Mr. A. DE OURO-PRETO (Brazil): My delegation wishes to congratulate you on your very able chairmanship of this Committee. We have all benefited from your great experience, skill and ability. Under your leadership, COPUOS has made significant progress, and during this time you worked closely with a fellow Brazilian, Mr. Edgard Ribeiro, as Rapporteur. There has always been a smooth and cooperative relationship between the two of you, and Mr. Ribeiro has asked me to offer you his sincere personal congratulations.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your kind words and also in this context, I thank my dear friend Edgard Ribeiro.

We have had a long list of speakers; I think this is the moment for me to thank you again for all the very kind words which I do not deserve. I wish the new members of the Bureau every success in their future work, and all the happiness that I felt in guiding this Committee. I now invite the new members of the Bureau to take their seats on the podium. (*Applause*)

Mr. U. Rao (India), Chairman, took the Chair.

The CHAIRMAN: It is a great honour for me to have been elected the new Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to you all for having entrusted me with this important position. I assure you of my firm commitment to the work of this Committee and my dedication to its continuing success in the promotion of international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space.

The Committee has made historic contributions towards the promotion of international cooperation in the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space, made possible because of its strong devotion and commitment to the spirit of mutual cooperation, consensus and compromise. I sincerely hope that with your support, cooperation and guidance, we will continue to build upon our past traditions and strive to achieve the dream and vision of realizing a truly global village – not just in the technical sense, which we have already achieved, but in the real sense, where all nations on this planet will benefit from the application of space technology.

With spectacular advances in technology, many new applications have unfolded in the peaceful uses of outer space. Consequently, the challenges of promoting international cooperation and further consolidating the work of this Committee are also becoming greater. I firmly believe that we can achieve greater heights in the promotion of promotion of international cooperation through our collective efforts.

I would like to offer my congratulations to Ambassador Raimundo González of Chile on his election as First Vice-Chairman of the Committee, and to Professor Mouslim Kabbaj of Morocco on his election as Second Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur. I am indeed privileged to take up the work of this new Bureau with two such distinguished colleagues, whose wealth of experience in the Committee is of great significance. I would also like to congratulate Professor Dietrich Rex of Germany and Dr. Vaclav Mikulka of the Czech Republic on their election as Chairmen of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and Legal Subcommittee, respectively. I look forward to working closely with all my colleagues to ensure that the Committee and its Subcommittees successfully fulfil their mandated tasks.

I am sure you will join me in expressing deep appreciation for the significant contributions made by our illustrious predecessors in the Bureau from Austria, Romania and Brazil, in their respective roles of Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur of the Committee. Their commitment and dedication to the Committee's work has enabled it to make significant and long-lasting achievements. With the adoption of five international treaties, five sets of legal principles governing space activities, and the holding of two major United Nations conferences on space activities, this Committee has created an enviable record as one of the most successful bodies in the United Nations. Without the efforts of our distinguished predecessors in the Bureau, it would not have been possible to take pro-active decisions, by consensus, on the promotion of international cooperation in outer space.

We owe special thanks to the outgoing Chairman, Ambassador Peter Hohenfellner, for his outstanding contributions over the last six years, and in particular his efforts in guiding the Committee through some difficult negotiations over the past few months. Shortly before the opening of this meeting, I had a brief talk with him and I could witness his deep dedication and belief in the principles of the United Nations, and his commitment to improve international cooperation. I feel that we already miss him, but I hope he will continue to work with us in another capacity.

The Committee also owes much to the outgoing Vice-Chairman, Ambassador Dimitru Mazilu, and the Rapporteur, Mr. Edgard Telles Ribeiro, for their dedicated services. At this point I would like to acknowledge the significant contributions made to this Committee by the Government of Austria. Throughout the history of COPUOS, Austria has provided immeasurable support to its work and has contributed greatly to its success.

Again I thank you for electing me as the new Chairman of the Committee, and I hope I can live up to the trust and confidence you have placed in me.

Before we move on to the next item on the agenda, as my first official act as Chairman of the Committee, it is my pleasure to welcome the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna, Mr. Giorgio Giacomelli, who will make an opening statement. I now give the floor to the Director-General.

Mr. G. GIACOMELLI (Director-General, United Nations Office at Vienna): I would like to welcome you all to Vienna, and to express to Ambassador Hohenfellner the great appreciation and gratitude of the Secretariat for the extraordinary work he has performed in leading this Committee. I would also like to thank the Government of Austria for their constant support to the Committee for so many years. I join with all of you in congratulating Professor Rao, Ambassador González and Professor Kabbaj on their election to the new Bureau, and wish them every success in the challenge which faces them.

I do have a nicely prepared speech in front of me! But in the spirit of saving precious time, I would prefer to say a few impromptu words. This Committee, with its excellent record, which has carried out its significant and substantive work for some decades, must now feel

gratified by a sense of fulfilment at the successful conclusion of a period of important work, let alone that which which lies ahead. Even in the difficult times of the cold war, COPUOS managed to reach consensus and make progress in a completely new area.

Outer space, originally linked only with the world of science fiction, has gradually developed into the most significant challenge to humanity, offering new vistas and perspectives of progress. It has also provided an element conducive to what is almost forced integration of the whole of humanity. COPUOS has been most innovative, and only recently has reviewed its working methods, taken a leading role, and commanded recognition from Member States in the General Assembly for its readiness to adapt to changing requirements, and to adopt new system which are already being copied by other bodies.

This is a difficult period of time – no less challenging, however. Ahead of the Committee lies the prospect of making this arm of the United Nations a key element in the context of progress and sustainable development. Throughout its existence, COPUOS has been greatly concerned with securing a structured development of what we might ambitiously call the "conquest" of space, while at the same time ensuring that the progress made is of benefit to all.

The technological application of outer space is a key factor in economic and social development, and provides the main vehicle for the major revolution of our times, the communications revolution. This area will undoubtedly grow and will be one of the greatest challenges of this era. Another challenge is the preparation of the third conference on outer space, UNISPACE III, which you decided to organize as a special session of this Committee. Again, this demonstrates the spirit of innovation which persists within COPUOS. UNISPACE III will be a tremendous landmark as concerns the significance and role of COPUOS within the ambit of the United Nations, which is indispensable not only as a meeting point, but as one of the key factors in the role of the new United Nations: to find the true *raison d'etre* of its being.

I will spare you further words, which would only reiterate what has already been stated most eloquently by so many of you, and close by giving you my best wishes for your deliberations here in Vienna.

The CHAIRMAN: I would like to thank the Director-General for his encouraging words to the Committee, in which he has highlighted some of its most important issues. I am sure the Committee is ready to meet these challenges which lie ahead.

Attendance by non-Members of the Committee

The CHAIRMAN: I wish to inform the Committee that I have received *notes verbales* from Angola, Azerbaijan, Bolivia, Cuba, Holy See, Luxembourg, Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Tunisia and the League of Arab States, in which they request permission to attend the current session of COPUOS as observers. I therefore propose that, in conformity with past practice, we invite those delegations to attend the current session and to address the Committee as appropriate. This is of course without prejudice to further requests of this nature, and does not involve any decision by the Committee concerning status: it is a courtesy we customarily extend to delegations.

If I hear no objection, we shall proceed accordingly. *It is so decided.*

Before moving on to the next agenda item, I now give the floor to Professor Kabbaj.

Mr. M. KABBAJ (Rapporteur): It is an honour and a pleasure for me to thank the Committee for my election. The new Bureau brings Asia, Latin America and Africa to the forefront in the field of the peaceful uses of outer space within the United Nations.

(continues in French) Delegations which initiated the debate on democracy in COPUOS can see today that those ideas have turned into concrete reality. I would like to pay tribute to Mr. Hohenfellner, who has presided over the deliberations towards this democratization through equitable representation of all geographic regions. As you know, the utilization of space is of great interest to Africa, particularly as regards spin-off effects, as mentioned by the Ambassador of Sudan; these are necessary for sustainable development, for food security, and to combat poverty, desertification and other scourges. As a result of scientific and intellectual curiosity, the people of Africa are very interested in space observation, astronomy, and other areas which our work in this Committee addresses.

Today, we must all cooperate and be more aware within the international community itself. UNISPACE III will represent the crowning of our achievements, and an extremely important milestone. I would like to assure Professor Rao and Ambassador González that I will fully apply myself to this very crucial area of international

cooperation in order to enhance universal knowledge for the well-being of humanity.

The CHAIRMAN: We will now move on to the next agenda item.

Statement by the Chairman

The CHAIRMAN: Today marks the beginning of a new period in the history of this Committee. While maintaining the principle of decision-making by consensus, in a comparatively short period of time the Committee has succeeded in carrying out a fundamental reform in its working methods since its establishment over three decades ago. This remarkable achievement is the result of our great commitment to overcome political difficulties and face challenges in promoting international cooperation in the ever-expanding areas of space exploration and exploitation.

The fundamental reform we have just witnessed has only been possible because Member States of the Committee recognized the need for such reform, in view of the major political and economic changes at the international level that have taken place over recent years. The Committee accomplished its task because it concentrated on optimizing and further enriching its functions to better serve the international community. This proves that it is possible to work effectively, through cooperation and compromise, to reach consensus among all members of the Committee even on the most complex political issues.

I would like to review the major events in outer space during the past year, as well as the highlights of work to be carried out by the Committee at this session. Before doing so, on behalf of the Committee I wish to thank the Chairman of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, Professor Dietrich Rex of Germany, who has guided the work of the Subcommittee with his great knowledge of space science and technology and in particular his experience in the field of space debris. I also wish to thank the Chairman of the Legal Subcommittee, Dr. Vaclav Mikulka of the Czech Republic, whose vast knowledge and experience of complex legal issues has greatly benefited the Subcommittee. My warmest congratulations go to Professor Vladimir Kopal of the Czech Republic for his excellent work as temporary Chairman of the Legal Subcommittee during Mr. Mikulka's absence.

Let me briefly highlight the major achievements in outer space over the past year which have a direct bearing on the work of this Committee. We can indeed be proud that on 4 October this year, we will celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the historic launching of "Sputnik", which dramatically ushered us into the space age. The spectacular achievements of the last four decades of space exploration have not only enabled us to go back to the beginning of time and reach the very end of the universe, but have also effectively diminished both time and distance, turning this beautiful planet of ours into a global village. The vast and endless benefits of space technology already extend to the field of communication, meteorology, TV broadcasting, education, agriculture, industrial growth, resource management, environmental protection, disaster mitigation, flood and drought management, health care and entertainment – touching virtually every aspect of human endeavour and making space exploration an integral part of daily life.

In the area of manned space flight, the Russian Federation maintained its occupation of its Mir Space Station by rotating crews, which have included astronauts of other countries. The German astronaut Reinhold Ewald spent 18 days on Mir, and Claudie André-Deshays of France spent two weeks there. Following Shannon Lucis, who spent 188 days in space (a new record for long-duration space flight for a woman), United States astronauts John Blaha and Jerry Linenger stayed on board Mir in rotation. On 29 April 1997, Linenger and Tsibliev performed the first joint astronaut-cosmonaut space walk, and worked around the Mir station for nearly five hours retrieving space debris detectors and micro meteors, and installing new equipment on the station's surface. Regular visits to orbital stations are important not only for periodic supply of provisions and the collection of scientific data for return to Earth, but also in order to provide information on long-duration flights which will help in the operation of future international space stations. Such joint efforts by American and Russian technicians also help to overcome both technical and cultural barriers.

As well as the Atlantis flights to Mir, other United States space shuttle missions have also made significant contributions to international space research. Canadian mission specialist Marc Garneau performed technological experiments during the STS 77 flight of Endeavour. During the STS 75 flight of Columbia, Canadian and French payload specialists Robert Trisk and Jean-Jacques Favier, took part in the long-duration flight of Columbia, carrying a complex space lab life and microgravity sciences laboratory.

Another examples of international cooperation is the operation of the Advanced Earth Observing Satellite

(ADEOS), the first of the new generation of environmental satellites successfully launched by the Japanese H-II launcher on 17 August 1996. It contains eight main instruments, contributed by Japan, France and the United States, for carrying out important marine, land and coastal observations with six additional sensors for monitoring ocean weather, atmospheric ozone and greenhouse gases. Incorporation of inter-orbit relay technology in ADEOS will provide the necessary experience towards establishing a global observation system.

Among the developing countries, India has gained vast experience particularly in the use of remote sensing technology. At present India has a constellation of four remote sensing satellites, the latest being IRS P3, launched by India's own PSLV launch vehicle in 1996. IRS P3 carries on board a Modular Opto Electronic Scanner designed and built by the German Space Agency, in addition to the payloads built by India for remote sensing and X-ray astronomy studies. By means of an agreement with EOSAT of the United States, IRS data is now available to the international community on a real time basis. China and Brazil have also made considerable progress in the development of their joint remote sensing satellite C-BERS.

There have been several new launches of small and micro satellites, some of which were designed and developed at universities. An experimental communications micro satellite, Unamsat-2, is a product of research undertaken at the Autonomous University of Mexico. Musat-1 is being used to demonstrate low-cost technologies for the Aeronautical University at Cordoba, Argentina. Both were launched by Russian launchers as piggybacks to larger satellites. The first Spanish-built mini satellite was successfully launched on 21 April by the Orbital Sciences Corporation's Pegasus XL launcher, which was carried into airspace over the Canary Islands by an L-1011 aircraft, which represented the first airborne satellite launch outside the territory of the United States. The Spanish 195 kg MINISAT-01 is designed to perform several scientific missions, including the study of extreme ultraviolet background radiation, the behaviour of liquid bridges under microgravity conditions, and the investigation of low-energy gamma radiation.

In the field of satellite communications, a number of new geostationary telecommunication satellites have been launched for Argentina, Canada, China, France, India, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Russian Federation, Thailand, Turkey, United States, and several regional and international organizations including Arabsat, Inmarsat and Intelsat. Spectacular developments in digital compression technology, multiple access protocols, modulation techniques and the convergence of powerful computers with satellite communications have already heralded the age of the information superhighway, allowing everyone on this planet to have instantaneous access to audio, video, voice, data and message information through multi-media services. Digital audio broadcasting, direct-to-home television, personal mobile communication and broad-band ISDN services are already on the horizon, which will lead to the establishment of a global information infrastructure. It is encouraging to see that more and more developing countries now appreciate the importance of participating in the information revolution, and are using advanced communication technologies for the development of their national economies.

I would like to conclude this overview by some remarks on satellite navigation. The cost of receivers for the Global Positioning System (GPS) has fallen dramatically in recent years from tens of thousands to a few hundred dollars. This trend appears to be continuing, which allows new GPS-related services to be directed to ordinary customers rather than just a restricted number of airlines and transportation companies who could afford to invest large amounts of money. With this ability to obtain position determination with an accuracy of one to three meters in real time, it is now possible for farmers to use the GPS navigation system for "precision farming", using appropriate local adjustments in nutrient levels, seeding pattern and crop density to maximize the yield.

These developments, in particular the increasing efforts at international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, clearly indicate that countries the world over now realize that cooperation among States and international organizations is a desirable and cost-effective way to conduct space activities. I am convinced that the work of COPUOS will continue to make a significant contribution to such cooperative efforts.

The provisional agenda which we have just adopted is self-explanatory. I will therefore concentrate on those topics to which the Committee should devote particular attention in order to progress and to provide guidance to its Subcommittees. In the first place, I would like to review the work of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee; the report of its thirty-fourth session is contained in document A/AC.105/672.

The Subcommittee continued its joint consideration of the agenda items on the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, and the imple-

mentation of the recommendations of UNISPACE 82 on a priority basis. The Expert on Space Applications made a report on the progress in the activities for 1997, and the Subcommittee approved the programme for 1998 as presented by the Expert. The report gives details of progress made in the establishment of regional centres for space science and technology education. I am pleased to note that following the creation of the Centre for Space Science and Technology Education in Asia and the Pacific, which began its second education programme in January 1997; centres in Latin America and the Caribbean and Africa will shortly become operational.

While the Programme on Space Applications continues to play a leading role in international efforts towards the development of regional indigenous capabilities, I am pleased to note the increasing interest among Member States in holding international and regional seminars and workshops on space applications, some of which are also organized under the auspices of the Programme. I would like to stress that the Programme on Space Applications plays a crucial role not only in implementing the recommendations of UNISPACE 82, contributing to the development of the indigenous capability of developing countries and the promotion of regional cooperation in space applications, but also in building a solid base for the success of UNISPACE III. In this context I would like to reiterate the appeal made to Member States by the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee to support the Programme through voluntary contributions.

During the Subcommittee's 1997 session, the Working Group of the Whole was reconvened to evaluate the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE 82. It was requested by the Subcommittee to carry out the tasks entrusted to the Advisory Committee by the General Assembly. The Chairman of the Working Group of the Whole, Mr. Muhammed Nasim Shah of Pakistan, deserves our warm congratulations for his assiduous and untiring efforts to promote consensus and for the progress achieved, particularly as concerns essential issues relating to the preparations for UNISPACE III.

The Working Group held a number of lengthy informal consultations and in particular held intensive discussions concerning the agenda for the Conference. It had before it a report by the Secretariat on matters relating to the planning of the special session of the Committee (UNISPACE III), and working papers submitted by the United Kingdom (on behalf of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United States) and the Group of 77. Several Member States made substantial contributions to this important work; based on its deliberations, the Working Group made recommendations concerning the objectives, form, venue, date, participation, provisional annotated agenda, financial aspects and additional components of UNISPACE III, thus fulfilling the task entrusted to it by the Advisory Committee. The report of the Working Group is contained in Annex II of the Subcommittee's report.

COPUOS is mandated by the General Assembly to perform the function of the Preparatory Committee and to report to the fifty-second session of the Assembly on progress made in the preparations for UNISPACE III. In adopting the report of the Working Group, the Advisory Committee noted that it provided the basis for the Preparatory Committee to carry out the task entrusted to it by the General Assembly. In this connection we must bear in mind additional recommendations put forward by the Advisory Committee, for example concerning the meeting pattern of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies in 1999. Several United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations – namely COSPAR, IAF and ISPRS – have already expressed their willingness to assist in preparations for UNISPACE III.

When I was head of the Indian delegation some five years ago, I put forward a proposal to hold a third United Nations conference on the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space, to be hosted in Bangalore, India. I am delighted to see the concept which I originally developed materialize in a concrete form. It is all the more rewarding for me to serve as your Chairman at this crucial moment, when the Committee is requested to fulfil its important mandate as the Preparatory Committee for UNISPACE III. During the present session, I sincerely hope we will make further progress in these preparations, based on past developments and recent achievements, thus carrying space activities and their benefits forward into the new millennium.

I invite all delegates to contribute to the consideration of this matter, which I propose we discuss under agenda item 7, "Report of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee".

The Scientific and Technical Subcommittee made further progress on the issue of space debris, which was considered on a priority basis. The Subcommittee's work was conducted in accordance with the multi-year work plan, adopted at the 1995 session to consider specific items during the period 1996-1998. Several experts in the field made useful contributions, resulting in a technical

report which focused on on modelling the space debris environment and risk assessment. The Subcommittee took note of technical changes and amendments to its technical report for 1996, which concentrated on the measurement of space debris. It agreed that any changes or updates to its technical report would be made at the next session, culminating in the finalization of the report on space debris in 1999. A section on mitigation measures would be added to the report in 1998, and the Subcommittee requested Member States to provide relevant information to its Chairman in advance in order for the inter-sessional drafting work to be suitably organized.

The potential threat of space debris to present and future space activities is now widely recognized, and the international community of scientists have voiced their growing concern over the lack of international regulations in various international space forums to mitigate the effects of space debris. The international community has yet to take concrete action in this respect, which requires a thorough understanding of the complex nature of space debris, the cost-effectiveness and cost-performance of possible mitigation measures, and recognition of the benefits to be gained by implementing such measures. At the same time, the interrelated interests of both space-faring and non-space-faring nations must be borne in mind. Work undertaken in the Scientific and Technical Committee will help establish a global understanding of this complex issue, thus allowing the Committee to take the necessary action to lead international efforts in formulating suitable measures.

Nuclear power sources in outer space was also discussed on a priority basis by the Subcommittee, and the Working Group on this item was reconvened under the chairmanship of Professor Rex of Germany, Chairman of the Subcommittee. The Working Group agreed that technical experts, including those from the International Atomic Energy Agency, should be invited to attend its 1998 session in order to identify and study current international technical standards applicable to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space.

At this year's session, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee devoted special attention to discussion of "Space systems for direct broadcasting and global information systems for space research". At its 1998 session, the Subcommittee recommended that the item "Scientific and technical aspects and applications of space-based meteorology" should be the focus of special attention, for consideration within the context of UNISPACE III. The Subcommittee recommended to COPUOS that the Committee on Space Research (COSPAR) and the International Astronautical Federation (IAF), in liaison with Member States, be invited to arrange a symposium to complement discussion of this subject. I am pleased to note the interest of both COSPAR and the IAF in contributing towards work in preparation for UNISPACE III and look forward to such continuing cooperation.

Turning to the work of the Legal Subcommittee, delegates will recall that the Subcommittee made significant contributions in 1996 to further developing an international regime governing space activities. Based on the work carried out and a subsequent recommendation by the Subcommittee, the General Assembly adopted the "Declaration on international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for the benefit and in the interest of all States, taking into account the needs of developing countries". The report of the Subcommittee on its thirty-sixth session and progress made in its work is contained in docu-ment A/AC.105/674.

As concerns the agenda item on the definition and delimitation of outer space and the character and utilization of the geostationary orbit, the Working Group was reconvened under the very able chairmanship of Mr. Gabriel Maffei (Argentina). The Working Group divided its work into two parts. Regarding the first part – the definition and delimitation of outer space – it examined replies from Member States to the questionnaire on possible legal issues in connection with aerospace objects, and a note by the Secretariat on results obtained from a comprehensive analysis of those replied.

With respect to the geostationary orbit, the Subcommittee had before it a working paper prepared by the Secretariat in cooperation with the secretariat of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in response to the Working Group's request at the 1996 session of the Subcommittee. This working paper contained an analysis of the compatibility of the approach outlined in the working paper submitted by Colombia to the 1996 session with ITU's existing rules and procedures on the use of the geostationary orbit. Germany had submitted a new working paper at the 1996 session, which was revised twice at this year's session; the latest revision of the paper contains a draft resolution entitled "Request to the International Telecommunication Union and its Member States: Ensuring equitable access to the geostationary satellite orbit/radio frequency spectrum resources" (annexed to the Subcommittee's report). This Committee may wish to review the working paper submitted by Germany as well as other working papers, which might lead to the

adoption of a resolution and agreement on future consideration of this question in the Subcommittee.

Following a recommendation of the 1996 session of COPUOS, the Subcommittee continued its informal consultations with a view to drawing up an annotated list of items that could be considered by this Committee at the present session for inclusion in agenda of the Subcommittee. Following these discussion, the Subcommittee agreed to recommend that a new agenda item, "Review of the status of the five international treaties governing outer space", as contained in a working paper submitted by Mexico, be included in its agenda starting with its 1998 session. The Subcommittee also recommended that further informal consultations on possible new agenda items should continue at its next session.

In its resolution 51/123, the General Assembly stressed the importance of the widest possible adherence to international treaties that promote the peaceful uses of outer space, and invited States not yet parties to such international treaties to give serious consideration to ratifying or acceding to them. This year marks the thirtieth anniversary of the Outer Space Treaty, which entered into force on 10 October 1967, and which forms the foundation for other treaties and legal principles governing space activities. Therefore it would seem an opportune moment to recommend inclusion of the agenda item "Review of the status of the five international treaties governing outer space" in the agenda of the Legal Subcommittee.

At the thirty-sixth session of the Legal Subcommittee, the International Institute of Space Law (IISL) and the European Centre for Space Law (ECSL) organized a symposium entitled "Celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the Outer Space Treaty". On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank both IISL and ECSL for their contribution to the work of the Subcommittee by stimulating discussions relating to its past achievements, present responsibility and future tasks. The Subcommittee agreed that at its 1998 session, IISL and ECSL be invited to hold a symposium on space law.

This concludes my review of the highlights of the work of the two Subcommittees. I hope we will have fruitful discussions in the Committee at this session and will be able to provide guidance for the future work of both Subcommittees.

As concerns other agenda items, the General Assembly has requested the Committee to consider on a priority basis the ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes, as well as to consider the spin-off benefits of space technology. I look forward to our discussions of these important issues.

With regard to the records of meetings, in resolution 51/123 the General Assembly noted with satisfaction that at its thirty-ninth session, the Committee had been provided with unedited verbatim transcripts in lieu of verbatim records. Following a request by the General Assembly, the Committee will evaluate the use of unedited transcripts at this session and inform it, through the Committee on Conferences, of its experience with the transcripts.

I wish to inform the Committee that the International Space University, a non-governmental organization, has applied for observer status with the Committee. The observer status of this organization will be considered under the item "Other matters".

Concerning the agenda item "Methods of work of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies", the package proposal by the former Chairman of this Committee, which contained elements for consensus agreement on the composition of the Bureau, agenda structures and the duration of the sessions of the Committee and its Subcommittees, has been formally adopted by the Committee. This package proposal is the result of extensive work, untiring efforts and a high level of compromise and cooperation by all members of the Committee. In order to give formal recognition to this important work, the package proposal will be annexed to the report of the Committee.

We are at a critical point in history. In spite of spectacular advances in science and technology, the level of poverty continues to persist, particularly in the developing countries, which account for over 80 per cent of the world's population but account for a mere 12 per cent of global GDP. The combined effects of exploding population growth and poor agricultural productivity have led to large-scale deforestation, extensive soil erosion, mismanagement of water resources and serious degradation of the environment. Large-scale urbanization due to migration of the rural population to urban areas in search of gainful employment, rapid industrialization and poor infrastructure exacerbate the situation as regards poor living conditions in large cities.

Interconnectivity of both natural and anthropogenic phenomena occurring on Earth – the weather, climate, geosphere and biosphere – have inextricably linked the fate of each country with that of the world as a whole. Increases in greenhouse gases, deforestation and

depletion of the ozone layer result in global warming which has repercussions world-wide: disturbances in El Nino and ENSO can result in severe drought across Asia, Australasia and Africa; volcanic eruptions and indiscriminate industrial activity can change the pattern of rain precipitation across the globe. All this clearly demonstrates the need for a global view for the survival of all of humankind, who have yet to realize that land is not just real estate, a lifeless geosphere, but a true living biosphere.

Our Committee should seize this unique opportunity to strive towards enhancing international cooperation in space activities and further strengthen efforts to make the benefits from space activities available to people everywhere. Present and future space activities must contribute to the economic security of all countries, particularly the developing countries, and must continue to promote sustainable development of the global society.

The fundamental aspect of long-term sustainable development strategy must necessarily be based on the paradigm of technological innovation, economic determination and physical constraints, arising from the need to strike a judicious balance between ultimate exploitability and regenerative capacity. All nations must think globally and act locally, because the survival of our planet as a whole depends on the restoration of equity and assurance of the minimum needs to all peoples of the world. One of our most important tasks in the future will be to provide a common platform for the exchange of information and ideas on the optimal utilization of space science and technology to achieve long-term sustainable development, and to develop appropriate strategies for economic reconstruction of the developing world.

We have much to do in the remaining three years of this century. We cannot afford to fail in fulfilling the expectations and rewarding the faith which people and nations hold in the United Nations system in general, and this Committee in particular. The success of UNISPACE III in 1999 and the fulfilment of our mandate for promoting international cooperation in space activities and seeking immediate solutions to the various complex issues on a consensus basis, must be accorded the highest priority. It is my hope that with the continued political commitment of the members of this Committee, we will succeed in making pro-active decisions, thus contributing to global prosperity through the promotion of enhanced international cooperation in the use of space technology.

Thank you for your attention, and my best wishes for another successful session.

Before we start our consideration of agenda item 5, "General exchange of views", I would like to make some general comments on our work schedule and practical arrangements of the session. In conformity with our usual practice, the indicative schedule of work annexed to the agenda just adopted will be as flexible as possible and may be adjusted if necessary. However, it if appears that we might conclude our session earlier than scheduled, we must so inform the Secretariat as soon as possible so that conference service staff can be assigned to other duties.

We will shortly begin the general exchange of views, which will continue tomorrow and, if necessary on Wednesday morning (4 June). The list of speakers for the general debate will be closed at the end of tomorrow morning's meeting. Our sessions will be held from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., and from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. It is important that we adhere to this schedule, and I would urge you to cooperate in this respect and thus make maximum use of the conference facilities provided. As from tomorrow morning, all meetings will be held in Conference Room III (seventh floor, C building), and the documents counter will be located on the seventh floor adjacent to the Coffee Corner.

Before beginning our discussion of agenda item 5, "General exchange of views", I give the floor to the Secretariat to make a general announcement.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? (Secretariat): On the occasion of the fortieth session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, the Permanent Representative of Austria, Ambassador Mayrhofer, requests the pleasure of the company of heads and members of delegations at a reception to be held today, at 6 p.m., in the restaurant of the Vienna International Centre.

General exchange of views

The CHAIRMAN: The first speaker on my list is the distinguished representative of Brazil, on behalf of the Group of 77.

Mr. A. DE OURO-PRETO (Brazil): On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I would like to congratulate you and the distinguished representatives from Chile and Morocco on your election to the Bureau. I am sure that this Committee will benefit from your vast experience and knowledge.

During the consultation process which has taken place since the 1996 session of the Committee, the Group of 77 has pointed out that the rules of procedure of the General Assembly provide for principles of equitable geographic representation and rotation as concerns the election of officers to the bureaus of various United Nations Committees and subsidiary bodies. The Group's wish was to see these principles being applied to COPUOS and its Subcommittees as soon as this could be achieved in an objective manner; with the election of the new Bureau, our hope has become a reality. We would also like to thank the former Bureau for their dedicated and excellent work, and especially the outgoing Chairman, Ambassador Hohenfellner, for his masterful work during the inter-sessional informal consultations on the working methods of COPUOS.

The Group of 77 and China has carefully considered the Chairman's package proposal, and would recall in this respect that the Chairman pointed out that this proposal was the minimum common denominator which could be arrived at. As concerns our position on the package proposal. We still feel there are several outstanding issue regarding the working methods which must be addressed in the future, but in the spirit of consensus we support the proposal as now presented. We would also like to reaffirm that our willingness to accept the package proposal is on the understanding that the candidates of our regional groups will be accepted.

As concerns the discussions in the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee on preparations for UNISPACE III, our Group has played a major role and sets out in document A/AC.105/C.1/L/212 its position on, among others, the date, financial aspects, meeting pattern and agenda for the Conference. We are happy to note the progress already made concerning the objectives, organization, financial aspects, annotated provisional agenda, and other components of the Conference. In order to contribute to the success of UNISPACE III, which is of particular importance to us, we will be participating actively in the preparatory work.

Last but certainly not least, I would like to state the Group's views concerning the agenda of the Legal Subcommittee. We believe that while new items should be added, the presents agenda items of the Subcommittee should be maintained, particularly as concerns the item on the geostationary orbit. The working paper submitted by Colombia on this subject merits further detailed discussion, and no item should be removed from the agenda until such substantive discussion has taken place. We therefore cannot support any proposal to delete the item on the geostationary orbit from the agenda of the Legal Subcommittee.

The Group of 77 and China offers the Chair its full support in the important discussions which will take place during this session of the Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: The next speaker on my list is he distinguished representative of India.

Mr. Y. TIWARI (India): I would firstly like to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of this Committee. Your vast experience and wealth of knowledge in the field of the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space, and particularly in promoting international cooperation and spreading the benefits of the applications of space technology, will undoubtedly steer the Committee towards further successes. The Indian delegation also congratulates Ambassador González and Professor Kabbaj, whose experience in the Committee and in the field of outer space will ensure that they make significant contributions to the work of COPUOS.

On behalf of the Government and people of India, I would like to express our deep appreciation and gratitude to the Committee for electing, by consensus, a very eminent fellow countryman of mine as Chairman of COPUOS at this important point in time. Since its inception, this Committee has set a tradition of taking decisions by consensus and has an impressive array of contributions towards the promotion of international cooperation in the exploration and useful uses of outer space. My delegation greatly appreciates the confidence shown by the members of this Committee to the new Chairman in entrusting him with this immense responsibility, and reaffirms its support for maintaining the rich traditions of consensus.

Space technology continues to grow at a rapid pace, taking advantage of rapid advances in interrelated fields, such as microelectronics, materials and information technologies. These advances have not only enabled the growth of known applications of space technology, but have also introduced several new applications such as personal mobile communications, navigation and decision support systems at the macro and micro level for applications which range from disaster management to the sustainable development of land and water resources by individual farmers. Therefore, the relevance of the applications of space technology today is not confined to a mere handful of nations: all of mankind has benefited. Such universal benefit is possible provided that there is continued international cooperation

and respect for the principle that outer space is the common heritage of mankind.

COPUOS has laid strong foundations both for the promotion of international cooperation and for maintaining outer space as the common heritage of mankind. A unique multilateral body within the United Nations for the promotion of international cooperation in the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space, COPUOS is responsible for the evolution and establishment of international law in this specific field. The five treaties which were conceived and drafted by COPUOS, as well as the other sets of legal principles adopted by the General Assembly on such wide-ranging subjects as international television broadcasting by satellite, remote sensing of Earth by satellite, use of nuclear power sources in space and outer space benefits, are testimony to this Committee's achievements. In order to build upon them and further increase international cooperation in this field, COPUOS has continued to examine relevant scientific, technological and legal issues which have arisen from recent global developments.

Given that the dynamics of technological change in the present-day world are both rapid and complex, COPUOS needs a sound strategy to deal with these changes. This does not mean that COPUOS should duplicate the work of other bodies: on the contrary, COPUOS should draw upon the strengths of other bodies and harmonize its work, focusing above all on achieving its own goals. Central to this role will be the Committee's ability to achieve political consensus on issues arising in the context of rapidly changing technologies and the ways and means by which their applications are pursued.

New developments in the field of outer space mean that attention must continue to be paid to maintaining a space environment which is reasonably clean, and accessible to all countries and to future generations. These developments in turn demand great coordination and cooperative efforts in activities pertaining to outer space undertaken by States in order to preserve it as the common heritage of mankind. The unique capability of space to provide scientific knowledge which will enhance our ability to protect the Earth's environment should be exploited more vigorously. The dynamism to meet these challenges can only come about with a clear vision of the goals of the Committee and efficient working methods. Our efforts to meet these challenges as we approach the new millennium should continue.

Let me briefly mention UNISPACE III, a subject which merits the Committee's urgent consideration during its current and future sessions. The consensus reached to convene a special session of the Committee open to all Member States of the United Nations – UNISPACE III – in July 1999 is a momentous decision. It provides a unique opportunity for increasing cooperation. Several important aspects have already been agreed upon during the thirty-fourth session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee. Pursuant to the mandate of the General Assembly, our Committee should act as the Preparatory Committee to the Conference, and it is therefore appropriate to consider the aspects of the preparatory work relating to the substantive items of the agenda at the current session. This process should involve all United Nations Member States, relevant United Nations specialized agencies, observers in the Committee, and appropriate non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations. An action plan, including a schedule for informing and inviting the above-mentioned organizations and Member States as concerns these preparatory activities need to be addressed. My delegation urges that the subject of preparatory activities should be taken up on a priority basis in this Committee.

Concerning the work of the thirty-fourth session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, my delegation is please to note considerable progress under the various agenda items, in particular on the subject of space debris and UNISPACE III. We greatly appreciate the work carried out by the Subcommittee in fufilling the tasks entrusted to it by both COPUOS and the General Assembly as concerns UNISPACE III. The Subcommittee will hold only two sessions between now and the holding of the Conference; therefore, the work of the Subcommittee as the Advisory Committee for the Conference should be given priority attention.

With respect to the work of the Legal Subcommittee, my delegation would like the discussion on identifying new items for its agenda to continue. We welcome the inclusion of the new agenda item entitled "Review of the status of the five international legal instruments on outer space".

My delegation would like to commend the excellent work carried out by the Working Group of the Whole, under the chairmanship of Ambassador Hohenfellner, on the working methods of the Committee, and his efforts to reach the consensus package proposal.

I will briefly mention some important events which are planned under the Indian Space Programme

for 1997. The launch of the second generation multi-purpose Indian satellite INSAT-2D is schedule to take place in Kourou (French Guyana) on 3 June. This satellite, similar to its predecessor INSAT-2C, will enhance capacity in the field of telecommunications and television broadcasting. The launch of the Indian remote sensing satellite IRS-ID, through the next flight of the Indian Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) is planned for the latter half of this year.

As in the past, India is continuing to vigorously pursue a broad spectrum of the applications of space technology in such fields as agriculture, crop monitoring, forest surveys, waste land development, urban planning, drought monitoring, water resource management and coastal zone studies. Large-scale projects aimed at using communication satellites for developmental and educational activities are also planned. In view of the continuing need to launch communications satellites, the Geostationary Launch Vehicle development programme is in progress, whose aim is to launch such application satellites in future into geostationary transfer orbit.

The Indian Space Programme's thrust towards developing cooperation with other space agencies continues. The IRS-P3 satellite, which was launched in 1996 and is currently in operation, carries a Modular Opto-electronic Scanner (MOS) payload of the German space establishment DLR. Data from Indian remote sensing satellites are also made available through commercial channels to the international community. The Centre for Space Science and Technology Education for Asia and the Pacific began its second course on 1 January 1997 on the subject of space communications. Thirteen people from nine countries in the region are taking part in the course. The next course, on remote sensing and GIS, is scheduled to be begin on 1 October.

Mr. Chairman, your assuming the Chair at this time has great significance for developing countries. It is also the first time that someone from a developing nation has assumed the chairmanship of COPUOS. It is important to note here your own background: a very eminent scientist and administrator. In continuing the excellent work of Ambassador Hohenfellner, your own valuable insights concerning space technology will be of great benefit to this Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: The next speaker on my list is the distinguished representative of Germany.

Mr. G. FULDA (Germany): I refer to rule 110 of our rules of procedure, which states "Congratulations to the officers ... shall not be expressed". It is my firm intention to neglect this instruction! Your presence in the Chair highlights a political and institutional development of this Committee which my delegation welcomes wholeheartedly. We are proud to have made a significant contribution to establishing a very delicate balance between unavoidable political changes, on the one hand, and maintaining the unique character and qualifications of COPUOS, on the other.

Your are presiding over the fortieth session of the Committee. In some cultures, 40 is a holy figure; 40 years is the lifespan of one generation. What we are experiencing today is a change of generations in an important United Nations Committee. As in family life, those changes do not always occur without tension and conflict. We can recall some of the results of such tension at our last meeting. However, after 12 months of extensive consultations, the family of space-oriented nations seems to have regained the will to survive, and the harmony of and dedication to consensus, which has been and will remain the prerequisites for our fruitful work. The transition period has been skilfully negotiated by Ambassador Hohenfellner: this Committee owes him the highest respect and I would ask the Austrian delegation to convey the thanks of the German delegation to him.

We must be fair to the first generation: its structures have become outdated, its agenda looked somewhat inflexible, and repetition prevailed over innovation. Nevertheless, the first 40 years of COPUOS has been a highly appreciated success story in international law-making. The technical, juridical and political expertise of our predecessors has compiled an impressive set of legal instruments governing outer space activities. However, my delegation was among the first to realize how deeply the traditional structure of this Committee had been embedded in the political logic of the cold war period. By 1989, not only the antagonistic blocs had withered away, but even before then, developing countries had emerged on the scene of space-faring nations, requesting full participation and representation in the work of this Committee and its institutional structures. The time for change was long overdue.

Change could not simply mean that some delegations be allowed to achieve the reforms they had been hoping for at the expense of the interests of others. To have blindly followed other United Nations patterns would not have satisfied the needs of a Committee which depends heavily on close and continuous interaction between scientists, technicians, lawyers and diplomats. In

fact, my delegation is convinced that the future of COPUOS will depend to a large extent on the calibre of the knowledge assembled in this body. That is why we have strongly advocated efficiency, savings in both costs and time, and concentration on issues of true relevance to future cooperation in space. Budgetary constraints which many countries are experiencing compel us to avoid any unnecessary waste of energy and resources.

When expressing our deep appreciation to Ambassador Hohenfellner for all his hard work, so many things come to mind. He kept the main issues together: political reform, but maintaining the special characteristics necessary to achieve the requisite quality and high standards; new agenda items, but continued efforts to cut into dead wood for new findings; political debate and sometimes controversial discussions, but at the same time stressing the paramount importance of consensus in achieving results.

Mr. Chairman, you are assuming your position at a critical point in time. You represent a country which can be proud of its impressive record in the development of space technologies. With your outstanding professional experience, your scientific, technical and administrative background, as well as the diplomatic skills which you have deployed for many years in this Committee, you will be the first leader of the next COPUOS generation. On behalf of my delegation and myself, I wish to express our heartfelt congratulations on your election as the first Chairman of the reformed COPUOS.

The CHAIRMAN: We have come to the end of our allocated time for this session. The Committee will reconvene promptly at 10 a.m. tomorrow morning. The meeting is now adjourned.

The sitting adjourned at 6 p.m.